

# CONNECTIONS

February 2013 VOLUME 13, ISSUE 2

Bringing Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services employees closer together

## 100 Peers & Growing...People Helping People in Recovery

Because peer support and wellness specialists have walked a mile in the shoes of people who are facing psychiatric issues, they are able to offer self-help and mutual support to others. DHHS' Office of Consumer Affairs is celebrating a milestone—exactly 100 people have been trained to be peer support and wellness specialists since the program began four years ago in the Division of Behavioral Health.

[read more>](#)

## Common Courtesy in the Workplace

Workplace manners are about making our coworkers' comfort and peace as important as our own. In this month's column, **Richard Mettler** addresses common complaints about cubicles and sets some ground rules on how to improve your workspace environment.

[read more>](#)

## Schaefer Remembered for Service as CMO & Director

"Dr. Schaefer has been an outstanding Chief Medical Officer," said Gov. Heineman. "Under her leadership, we have been able to create a culture of wellness all across the State of Nebraska. She has been a positive leader and wellness advocate for our state."

When Dr. Schaefer leaves her position on March 8, she will be remembered for helping Nebraskans stay healthy, keeping Nebraskans safe and so much more.

[read more>](#)

## Recognize Your Coworkers for the Great Work They Do!

By Kaitlyn Betz, Human Resources and Development

**2013 Employee and Supervisor of the Year nominations are due March 22, 2013!**

Even though the work we do at DHHS can be very fulfilling, it's always nice to be recognized for a job well done. Do you know someone who is constantly going above and beyond in his/her work and truly exemplifies the DHHS mission of helping people live better lives? Here's your chance to recognize those people for their special contributions to this agency and the people we serve.

Nominations for the 2013 DHHS Employees and Supervisors of the Year are being requested. You can access the nomination forms on the HR&D website at [http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/hur\\_recognition\\_governorsprogram.aspx](http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/hur_recognition_governorsprogram.aspx). You can also pick up the forms at your local human resources office. Nominations may be submitted for coworkers within your unit or outside your immediate work area. But hurry! Nominations are due by Friday, March 22, 2013.

DHHS employees are the core of our agency. It is important to recognize our employees for being exemplary and demonstrating the DHHS Values and Core Competencies with their coworkers and the people they serve on a daily basis. Encourage excellence and share your thoughts about those who set a great example by completing a nomination form today!

## DHHS STARS SHINE BRIGHT

2013 DHHS Employee and Supervisor of the Year Awards

Nomination forms are available online or in your local Human Resources & Development Office.

Facility, Customer Service Center, and Service Area employees should send nomination forms to their Administrators.

Central Office employees should send the forms to Kaitlyn Betz in Human Resources & Development, 5th Floor, Nebraska State Office Building, Lincoln, Nebraska.

**Nomination forms are due March 22, 2013**



HR-0713-1/2013 (08/23)

# Stay Connected on



## make the connection . . .

**DHHS Public Website:** [www.dhhs.ne.gov](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov)  
**DHHS Employee Website:** <http://dhhsemployees/>  
**DHHS Helpline:** 1-800-254-4202, (402) 471-6035 in Lincoln, or via e-mail at [dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov](mailto:dhhs.helpline@nebraska.gov)

Chief Executive Officer: <b>Kerry Winterer</b>	Medicaid and Long-Term Care Division Director: <b>Vivianne Chaumont</b>
Behavioral Health Division Director: <b>Scot Adams, Ph.D.</b>	Public Health Division Director/Chief Medical Officer: <b>Dr. Joann Schaefer</b>
Children and Family Services Division Director: <b>Thomas Pristow</b>	Veterans' Homes Division Director: <b>John Hilgert</b>
Developmental Disabilities Division Director: <b>Jodi Fenner</b>	Chief Operating Officer: <b>Matt Clough</b>

*Connections* is published monthly for employees of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services by Communications & Legislative Services (CLS).

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## [DHHS' Employee Website....](#)

New information and photos are added daily to the employee website. Here are some recent posts and the dates they appeared. Like what you're seeing and reading? Then check out the employee homepage every day! Got an idea or a photo you'd like to share for the employee homepage or *Connections*? Send it to [Dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov](mailto:Dianna.seiffert@nebraska.gov).

## Homepage Homeruns

### [Using Facebook to Help Find Relatives of State Wards,](#) **Feb. 4, 2013**

**Debi Schriener**, resource developer in Children and Family Services' Southeast Service Area in Lincoln, was challenged by staff to find new ways to locate relatives. She began working with Facebook where she knew people 'friend' family members and identify family in photos.

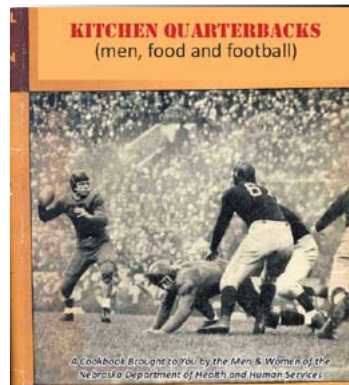


"We're going the extra mile to find a happy home for children," Schriener said. "Anything we can do for that to happen makes all the effort worthwhile."

Read more: Debi's story was featured in the January issue of [Connections](#). See pages 6 and 7.

### [Men's Health Cookbook Has Recipes that Please,](#) **Jan. 30, 2013**

Does Super Bowl snack planning have you stumped? You can find some crowd pleasers in the DHHS "Kitchen Quarterback"



cookbook. Think conversion salsa, cowboy beans, fiery hummus dip, quarterback meatballs, Thai turkey burgers, chili, and, so much more.

The Appetizer "Kick-off" recipes start on page 14. "First Down" recipes (soups, sandwiches, salads and sides) start on page 29. This is the section where you'll find two very different and very delicious chili recipes.

### [Got the Blues? Not These BSDC Employees,](#) **Jan. 24, 2013**

*By Julie Bratt, Behavior Support Team Staff Assistant, BSDC*

Several staff working at 201 Kennedy Blvd. on the campus of the Beatrice State Developmental Center coincidentally wore their blue "Proud To Be BSDC Staff" t-shirts Friday, Jan. 18. The t-shirts were generously handed out to everyone attending the Certification Celebration on July 21, 2012, which celebrated all ICFs on campus becoming fully certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. All BSDC staff received their t-shirts from the BSDC Family and Friends Association as a "thank you" for staff's dedication to and support of all those living at BSDC.



# The Good Life:

A reminder of what we all share and hope to provide to our fellow Nebraskans



By Kerry T. Winterer, CEO

Several things come to mind for my article this month.

The first is to thank **Dr. Joann Schaefer** for more than 10 years of public service with DHHS. Dr. Schaefer's last day as the Director of the Division of Public Health/Chief Medical Officer is next Friday, March 8. She was here when I came in 2009, and I've appreciated her insight and her commitment to help people live better and healthier lives.

I want to congratulate **Dr. Joe Acierno** who will become the Director of the Division of Public Health/Chief Medical Officer on March 8. Joe started with DHHS as an attorney in Legal Services in 2006 and became Deputy Chief Medical Officer in 2007. I look forward to working with Joe in his new position.

Not surprisingly, there's more to read about Dr. Schaefer in this issue.

## Heartfelt Gratitude

Now to the last item for this article.

Thank you. These are two simple words that mean a lot. Saying thank you can turn someone's day around. And when that happens, it's a great feeling for both people.

I received a thank you note recently that was a powerful reminder of how important we are to those who receive our services. This simple note of thanks came to me a few days before I gave an overview to state senators about DHHS and the important work we do. I shared this letter with those senators so they could see through a client's eyes the difference our work makes, as well as how a simple thank you can also make a difference. I'd like to share parts of that letter with you, too.

## Dear Mr. Winterer:

*Yesterday when I called NDHHS to gather some information about my case for benefits with the state, rather than begin with my questions, I simply began relaying to the woman who took my call my thanks to the people of the State of Nebraska my thanks for all the help they provide me each month to make my life liveable. First I heard silence, and then the woman I was talking with replied, "No one has ever said 'thank you' to me before for anything we do for them." I was stunned.*

*I am a 62-year-old woman, raised in another great heartland state, with the same values and standards we hold dear in Nebraska, and I could not believe that people are not expressing their gratitude to their state and the workers who labor long and hard to make our system work for us. I know it is sometimes a difficult and seemingly a thankless task.*

*I became disabled in 2005 while working in Oklahoma. I had moved there from Nebraska to care for my elderly father in 2000 while he was ill and stayed while he was dying. I remained because I was working and wanted to complete my work career there. I always had planned to return to Nebraska because all three of my children and their families live here in Omaha. I want to be an active part of my grandchildren's lives, even if I cannot do all the things with them that I could if I were not disabled. I am getting basically the same benefits as I was in my home*

*state, but still, I appreciate them even more being able to be with my family.*

*I try to live my life in gratitude, and believe in giving thanks where it is due. I begin and end each day in giving praise for the blessings in my life and the people and State of Nebraska are blessing me. So I thank God for you and the State of Nebraska. It is only in being thankful for what we have and in doing whatever we can for others that we continue to function as a society.*

## Sincerely and Gratefully Yours

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Thank you often go unsaid, and I don't intend to let that happen here. Thank you for what you do every day. Your work requires so many special skills...a great deal of knowledge, diplomacy, patience and empathy, to name a few. You are committed and dedicated and proud of the good work you do. And you should be. Your work and the services you provide day in and day out are vital to Nebraskans everywhere.

Sometimes we hear from satisfied clients, like the letter I received above, and those comments are always gratifying to read. When the thank yous go unsaid, though, I want to make sure that you know you are making a positive difference for so many people. You are truly helping people live better lives every day. And, for that, I thank you.

# 100 Peers and Growing... People Helping People in Recovery Through Peer Support

By Marla Augustine

DHHS' Office of Consumer Affairs is celebrating a milestone—exactly 100 people have been trained to be peer support and wellness specialists since the program began four years ago in the Division of Behavioral Health.

These specialists give people in recovery the skills they need to navigate life and maintain their recovery, according to **Scot L. Adams**, director of the Division. “They assist people by bringing hope to those who have been given psychiatric diagnoses,” he said. “Peer supporters prove that there can be a strong and contributing quality of life after diagnosis.”

A peer support and wellness specialist is someone who is trained to share his or her experiences with behavioral health conditions with people using mental health services. The key mission of a peer specialist is to convey hope to others about the possibility of recovery. A specialist promotes self-determination, mutual responsibility, and empowerment, and assists people in achieving mutual goals.

“Through relationships with peer support and wellness specialists, we can think about help in a new way,” said **Carol Coussons de Reyes**, administrator

of the Office of Consumer Affairs in Behavioral Health. “Rather than focusing on problem solving and what we don’t want in our lives, we instead challenge one another to discover our hopes and dreams. Together we learn and grow and move toward what we want.”

Because peer support and wellness specialists have walked a mile in the shoes of people who are facing psychiatric issues, they are able to offer self-help and mutual support.

Peer specialists help those with psychiatric diagnoses build connections with others, help others understand their world view, define self-discovery as a learning and growing process, and help them move toward mutual goals.

Studies suggest that the use of peer support can help reduce the overall need for and use of mental health services over time. When peers are part of hospital-based care, the results indicate shortened lengths of stays, decreased frequency of admissions, and a subsequent reduction in overall treatment costs.

To be certified as a peer support and wellness specialist, a person must complete 40 hours of [training](#) offered

through the Office of Consumer Affairs and take an examination.

“Trained peer specialists go on to work in many settings, such as hospitals, treatment centers, the regional centers and day programs,” said Coussons de Reyes. “They offer a connection to a peer relationship to assist individuals in building relationships with others in the community.”

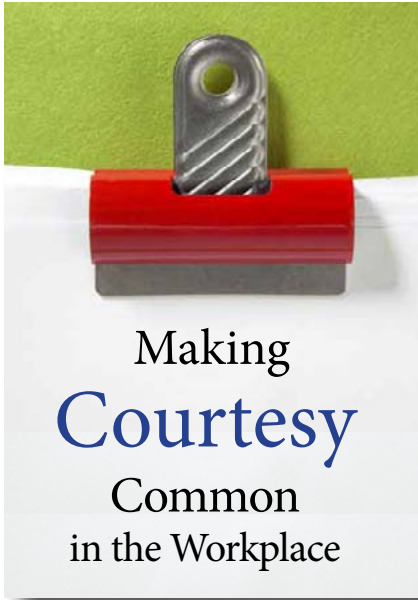
Information on the training is available on the [DHHS website](#) under “peer support.”



**Carol Coussons de Reyes (above, right) writes,** “This photo was taken in 2009 at the National Alternatives Conference in Omaha, Nebraska. Nebraska was hosting the conference. I had just moved to Nebraska. Charles B. Willis is a peer support specialist from Georgia. He was at the conference. Charles has traveled to Nebraska to tour the state speaking on behalf of Peer Support. He is one of my best friends.”

# Cubicle Etiquette

By Richard Mettler,  
Human Resources and Development



Cubicles can facilitate office camaraderie, teamwork and communication. But cubicle work spaces also bring special issues of courtesy that do not apply to employees with a traditional office.

A cubicle is a personal office with no door. The cubicle next to yours is someone else's office.

A good rule of thumb for cubicle etiquette is **that if it bothers you when others do it, avoid doing it yourself.**

*“Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use.” ~Emily Post*

However, some things that don't bother you may bother others. It's a good idea periodically to ask if there is something you can do or not do to help improve the workplace.

The following examples of cubicle area ground rules address common complaints. Your cubicle area may find additional ground rules helpful.

- Be aware of noise that you create—talking in person or on the phone (especially via speaker phone), cell phone rings, laughing, music.
- Avoid discussion of personal, sensitive and confidential matters that can be overheard by people in nearby cubicles.
- Get permission before entering someone's cubicle by knocking gently on the person's cubicle doorway or asking, “May I come into your cubicle to discuss something with you briefly?”
- Don't carry on conversations from your cubicle with a person from another cubicle.
- Don't ‘prairie dog’—hang over a cubicle wall to have a conversation.
- If a group collects around your cubicle, suggest that you all move elsewhere.

- Let people know when you are concentrating and wish not to be disturbed. Place a sign on your cubicle entrance to let coworkers know you are occupied. For example, “Under deadline, please return at 4:00.” Or, “On an important call, please leave a message.”
- Avoid strong perfume, cologne, air fresheners and highly-seasoned food while in your cubicle.

**Workplace manners are about making our coworkers' comfort and peace as important as our own.**

.....  
Please email me your thoughts, concerns or suggestions about workplace courtesy and workplace relationships at: [Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov](mailto:Richard.Mettler@nebraska.gov) . I will email you a response, and perhaps anonymously feature your thoughts, concerns or questions in a future column.



***A cubicle is a personal office with no door. The cubicle next to yours is someone else's office.***

## Dr. Schaefer's One True Passion: Helping People Live Healthier, Safer Lives



“Dr. Schaefer has been an outstanding Chief Medical Officer,” said **Gov. Dave Heineman**. “Under her leadership, we have been able to create a culture of wellness all across the State of Nebraska. She has been a positive leader and wellness advocate for our state.”

“Dr. Schaefer has been with the Department for over 10 years,” said **Kerry Winterer**, CEO of DHHS. “The previous Department of HHS Regulation and Licensure, and now the Division of Public Health, have benefitted greatly from her leadership and energy.”

These were a few of the many positive comments Gov. Heineman and Winterer shared when they announced that **Dr. Joann Schaefer**, Nebraska’s Chief Medical Officer and Director of the Division of Public Health, was leaving DHHS.

Schaefer has served in a dual role as Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health since 2005. She was Deputy CMO before that, and board certified in family practice before that.

Schaefer has always been passionate about public health. It’s in her blood and her bones, she says, and it’s all she has ever known and all she has ever wanted to do.

“It is a passion that I just can’t explain,” said Schaefer. “To me, living my own adventure while helping others see the value in their lives so that they can live their own adventures is something that keeps me working every day.”

When Schaefer leaves DHHS on March 8, she will be remembered for strengthening public health, tackling personal health challenges and so much more.

Schaefer has a special knack for bringing people together. In her career with the

state, she has helped Nebraskans live healthier lives through preventive screenings, nutrition and physical activity. She has created a culture of wellness across Nebraska by recognizing outstanding examples of wellness in the state, in the workplace, and in schools.

Schaefer continues to promote public health achievements like safe drinking water, vaccination and disease control so people can learn and appreciate how public health touches all of our lives. Her leadership in emergency preparedness continues to help Nebraska earn national recognition.

“I believe public service is a privilege and it was an honor to be charged with taking care of the people in this state,” she said. “We’ve made great strides improving the health of Nebraskans. I’m excited about what we’ve already done, what we’re doing now and where the future will take us.”

In her personal life, Schaefer leads by example and always has amazing stories to share. She has shown people they can overcome health challenges by publicly talking about her own journey as a liver transplant patient, and how a healthy lifestyle along with a positive

attitude can really make a difference in longevity and quality of life.

Schaefer has been honored by the American Medical Women’s Association for her contributions to medicine and the Nebraska Medical Association as Physician of the Year in 2004. She is a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians, the Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians, the Metro Omaha Medical Society, and the Nebraska Medical Association.

We wish Schaefer much success and happiness in her new job with BlueCross BlueShield of Nebraska. Nebraskans will miss Schaefer’s passion for public health, her praise for people’s health successes, her support of the state’s charitable giving campaign, her friendly smile and her love of apples. Thank you, Dr. Schaefer, for all you have done to make Nebraskans healthier and safer.

*Best Wishes,  
Dr. Schaefer*

# Way to Go!

Statewide and national recognitions, honors and awards

## Way to Go, Stacey!

**Stacey Klimek**, Training Specialist, Omaha, was selected by the Nebraska Adoption Conference 2012 planning committee to receive the Friends of Adoption Spotlight Award.

The Friends of Adoption Spotlight Award was established in 2012 to recognize individuals, families, and organizations in Nebraska who have had a positive impact on adoption for Nebraska children in foster care. Klimek was recognized for her contributions at the Friends of Adoption Reception in August in Lincoln.

Stacey provides adoption training for all the Children and Family Services Specialists across the state. Stacey's supervisor, **Paulette Wathen** said Stacey was chosen for this award in part due to her dedication to accurate and timely training.

In the selection letter, Jessyca Vandercoy program director (at the



time) of Right Turn-Post Adoption Services in Omaha, wrote, "There are countless people who are dedicated to ensuring that each child in Nebraska's foster care system has a loving and committed permanent family. You have been instrumental in working toward positive outcomes for every child. I thank you for your contribution."

Every child deserves to grow up in a good home. Thank you, Stacey, for helping Nebraska children find theirs.

## Changing the Way We Determine Medicaid Eligibility for All Medicaid Programs

Currently, the Division of Children and Family Services (CFS) manages the client eligibility process for several public assistance programs in addition to the Medicaid program. To better align divisional responsibilities, the determination of Medicaid eligibility for all Medicaid programs will shift to the Division of Medicaid and Long-Term Care (MLTC) starting July 1.

Throughout the transition, CFS staff and MLTC staff will work closely with Human Resources, Support Services and IS&T. Current staff levels are expected to be maintained, while additional employees could be hired as Nebraska implements the Affordable Care Act.

A team has been formed to develop a transition plan. They will seek input from CFS and MLTC staff and determine how to best address the customer service expectations of clients, who will now be served by both Divisions. In the meantime, answers to employee questions will be provided through a 'mailbox' link on both the CFS and MLTC employee intranet home pages. Responses to your questions will be posted for all employees to read. Look for the "Medicaid Eligibility Transfer Project" mailbox at: <http://dhhsemployees/sites/cfs/Pages/CFSHome.aspx> and <http://dhhsemployees/sites/mltc/Pages/MLTCHome.aspx>. We are early in the process and will do our best to keep everyone well informed throughout the process.



<http://dhhsemployees/sites/cfs/Pages/CfFSHome.aspx>

<http://dhhsemplooyees/sites/mltc/Pages/MLTCHome.aspx>

# In Gratitude

Letters to DHHS employees who are *helping people live better lives*

**Jana Peterson** (Administrator, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Kearney) and YRTC-K Staff

Just wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you again to all the groups that assisted with our special projects this year at the Peterson Senior Activity Center. We are so lucky to be able to partner with YRTC. The seniors that we serve have been so impressed with the groups. The kids should be proud of themselves, and the staff should be commended for the job you are doing.

We will keep coming up with events and projects so that hopefully we give more groups the opportunity to come to PSAC and interact with the seniors.

Thanks again.

**Peterson Senior Activity Center**

**Mark Darby** (Youth Counselor, Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center, Kearney),

Thank you for everything you have helped our son with and for keeping communication with us as open as possible.

**A Thankful Parent**

*Here's a note from the Governor's Office:*

A man from Omaha called to express his gratitude for the assistance his family received when they found out his 11-year old son had Type I Diabetes. He said that **Roxy McCormick** (Secretary, Economic Assistance, Lincoln) was so helpful and caring. He wanted the Governor to know what a wonderful state employee she is. He was very grateful for everything she did for them, and he couldn't stop singing her praises! Way to go, Roxy! The Governor sends his thanks.

**Sharon Johnson** (System Change Grants Coordinator, Medicaid and Long-Term Care),

We sent this card this very day to thank you for what you have done. We almost lost hope in the system. Nobody else told us there were actual resources and help. You did! For your help, we are extremely thankful. You are a truly caring person. We will keep in touch as everything progresses.

**A Grateful Family**

Thanks! 

CLS-PB-1 (99726)

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services mission:  
***Helping people live better lives.***